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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1367
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2452
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9468
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7724
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5460
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3891
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0046
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0244
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0862
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4509
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0029
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7263
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0241
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0153
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000142

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: ANGLICAN BISHOP OFFERS ADVICE AND HOPE

REF: COLOMBO 140

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On February 25, Ambassador called on Anglican Bishop Duleep Kamil De Chickera, a well-respected and influential Sri Lankan cleric. The bishop saw a role for the international community in Sri Lanka but cautioned against a didactic approach. While there were two national interfaith groups and many local ones, none were actively engaged in Sri Lanka. The bishop noted improvements in the Sinhalese vision for relations with Tamils and Muslims and opined that eventually Sri Lankans would demand change in the current direction of their country. END SUMMARY.

COURTESY CALL ON ANGLICAN BISHOP

12. (SBU) Ambassador called on Anglican Bishop Duleep Kamil De Chickera, a well-respected and influential Sri Lankan cleric.

The bishop had recently released a statement on Fonseka's arrest and detention, calling for clarification of charges and a transparent judicial process. He was also part of a post-election joint statement by six Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops highlighting concern over the campaign process, low Tamil voter turnout, the use of transfers for political ends, terminations and promotions to reward or punish military, police, and public servants after the election, and the disappearance of journalist Mr. Eknaligoda.

(NOTE: The bishop is considered liberal within Anglican circles and drew international attention when he delivered a sermon at the Lambeth Conference, calling for inclusiveness in communion for all, "regardless of color, ability, gender or sexual orientation." END NOTE.)

ROLE FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

13. (C) The bishop urged Ambassador not to remain silent in Sri Lanka, acknowledging the need to express U.S. views and to promote international human values. He emphasized, however, that the U.S -- and the international community -- should frame problems as universal learning opportunities, acknowledging their own histories and responsibilities, rather than criticizing. A long history of colonization had left Sri Lankans easily "offended by the teacher mentality." Rajapaksa had won favor from Sinhalese who saw him as "a person who, right or wrong, would stand up to the global north." The bishop also recommended quietly building up relationships within the government, noting that Rome was not built in a day. Regarding advocacy on individual human rights cases, the bishop advised reminding the state of its obligations rather than focusing on its failures and soliciting individual "favours."

INTERFAITH COORDINATION

14. (C) According to the bishop there are two major interfaith organizations bringing monks, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim leaders together: the Congress of Religions and the Inter-religious Peace Foundation. He recalled that the end of the war brought a new understanding among monks of how "the crisis was eating at the roots of democracy" and "opened peoples' eyes to the movement against dissent" in politics and the media. But the interfaith groups had not moved forward to act. (NOTE: The Fonseka arrest did galvanize monks of varying castes into issuing a joint statement on democratic governance and calling for a council of clergy to discuss it. (Ref. A). END NOTE.) At the local level, there were many low profile interfaith groups, helpful for

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sustaining trust among communities, but otherwise limited in their roles.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

15. (C) While the bishop admitted to concern about "moderate, principled people" who seemed to have fallen in line with the Rajapaksa regime, he also expressed hope for Sri Lanka. In his view, the Sinhalese vision for relations with Tamils and Muslims had improved. The Sinhalese were more relaxed now that the war was over, and they sensed no immediate threat from the LTTE. Reports of intimidation of Tamils in daily life had decreased. The bishop also opined that change would come "when people come to their senses and say 'enough,'" citing historical examples such as apartheid in South Africa, civil rights in the U.S., and aboriginals in Australia.

COMMENT

16. (C) The bishop's encouragement to the Ambassador that she continue to express U.S. views and to promote international human values by framing problems as universal learning opportunities reflected thoughtful advice from a good embassy contact with an important view on, and voice in, Sri Lanka. His advice complemented the consensus approach to engaging the GSL reached by Colombo-based chiefs of mission (COMs) in a meeting hosted by the Ambassador later on February 25 (septel). The COMs agreed that any GSL attack on core democratic values or institutions should be met with strong denunciation by the international community and that the international community should re-engage with the president after the April 8 election regarding his promises on reconciliation, the 13th Amendment, and re-development in the north and east.

BUTENIS